

Short Film Production

Leah Sheridan

Process Workbook

2404472



This project was my first experience being involved in the pre-production, writing and acting stages of a short film. It was rewarding to see a collaborative idea develop into a finished piece. In this workbook, I have reflected on my creative process with future employment in mind, character creation through Uta Hagen and costume and how I experienced filming days.

Self-tapes

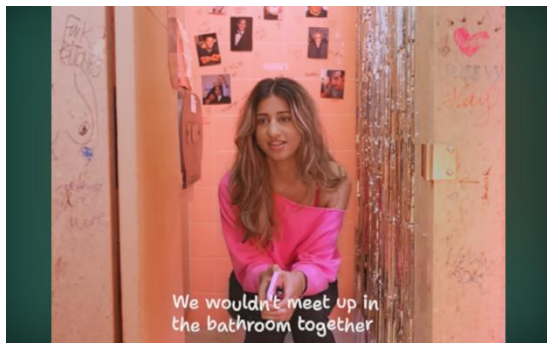
We started off our module by recording self-tapes. I learnt '*Quiche Isn't Sexy*' (Davies, 2015) by Gabriel Davies.

I recorded mine in a portrait format. I noticed that watching my peers' self-tapes was important so I could see how different versions looked on the screen. I noticed that the composition looked better when filmed in landscape as it gave them more room on the screen to be seen. I was able to rerecord mine in the correct orientation, see appendix 1 for a still of the before and after versions. The process gave me insight into what life would be like as an actor sending in self-tapes, because it was a challenge to prepare and learn a monologue in a short time.

Writing process/ pre-production

'Pre-Production is the planning process and execution of every task that must take place before production begins' (STUDIOBINDER, 2024).

To begin coming up with ideas for possible pitches, I watched short films to see which stylistic and storytelling methods I felt worked best. A film I particularly liked was '*The Girls Bathroom*' 2025. It was an interview style film based in one location. I particularly liked the interviews, they felt intimate as they were honest and relaxed (see photos 1A-C below for stills of the short).



1.A



1.B



1.C

When it came to thinking of ideas for our film, Maarc and I were discussing a quotation list I have kept since first year of funny things people have said, while listing them out we started talking about an idea for a university-based mock-documentary.

*'A **mockumentary** is a work of fiction that's presented in the style of a documentary. Its linguistic roots lie in the conjunction of the words "mock" and "documentary". Filmmakers have used the mockumentary format to criticize, satirize, and generally make fun of various subjects'.* (Heckmann, 2022)



2.A

2.B

With the whole group, we were talking about our idea with shots like the point of view shots in 'Peep Show' (Peep Show, 2003-15) see photos above 2A-B. *'This technique creates an intimacy with the characters' thoughts and feelings, allowing viewers to experience their awkwardness and misadventures in a visceral way.'* (News, 2025). We wanted the audience to feel like they were also experiencing living in the flat, not just observing it. We also added it to make it unique. We decided to call piece '**B1 F8**', standing for block one flat eight.

For the second pitch, '**drive safe**', we liked the idea of a paradox and after many ideas we all agreed on a car crash where you enter a 'new' world when you crash and the story loops at the end. We decided to have two contrasting pitches to push ourselves when writing it. Also, it gave us range to explore the type of characters we could play. This allowed me to push my boundaries with character creation.

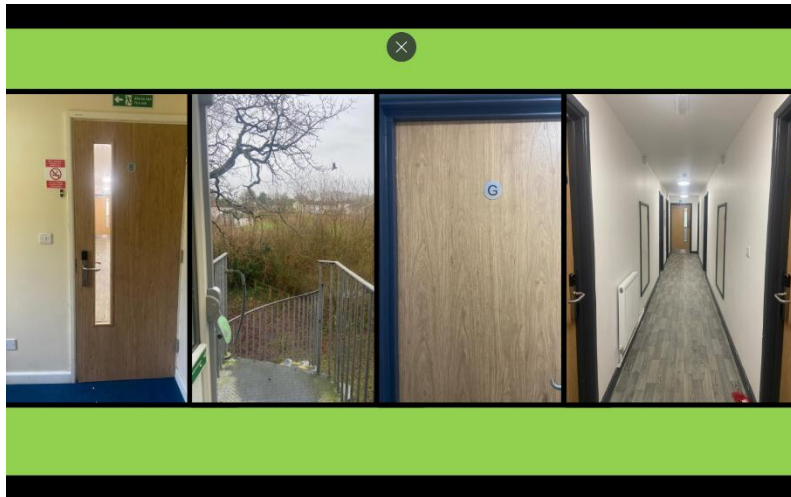
The Pitch

In **B1 F8**, I decided to create Millie, a stereotypical chav.

I also took on the role of location scout. ‘A **location scout’s** principal job is submitting photographs of possible locations’ (Maier, 1994, p. 7). This role involved asking permission from our other flat mates if we can film in the flat and considering practical factors regarding suitable lighting, sound, traffic, power sources and health and safety aspects. I photographed the layout of the flat to show our crew, see photos below 3A-B. At the time we were not planning on filming in a bedroom, so I did not take pictures. However, we later decided to film there and the crew had not seen the location. Reflecting on this, I now know how important it is to document all possible filming locations, as productions plans change.

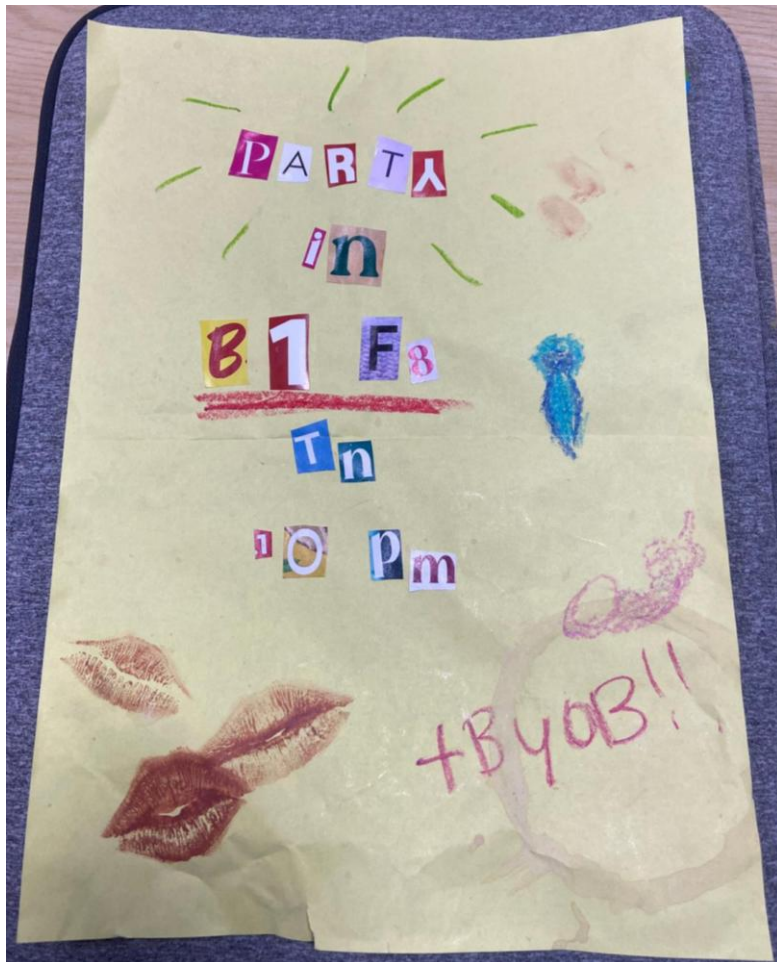
I found location scouting to be enjoyable and insightful as it reminded me that there are many roles within the industry beyond acting on screen. Through further research, I learned that the typical pathway into this role often starts as a production assistant before progressing to location scout through networking and volunteering.





3.B

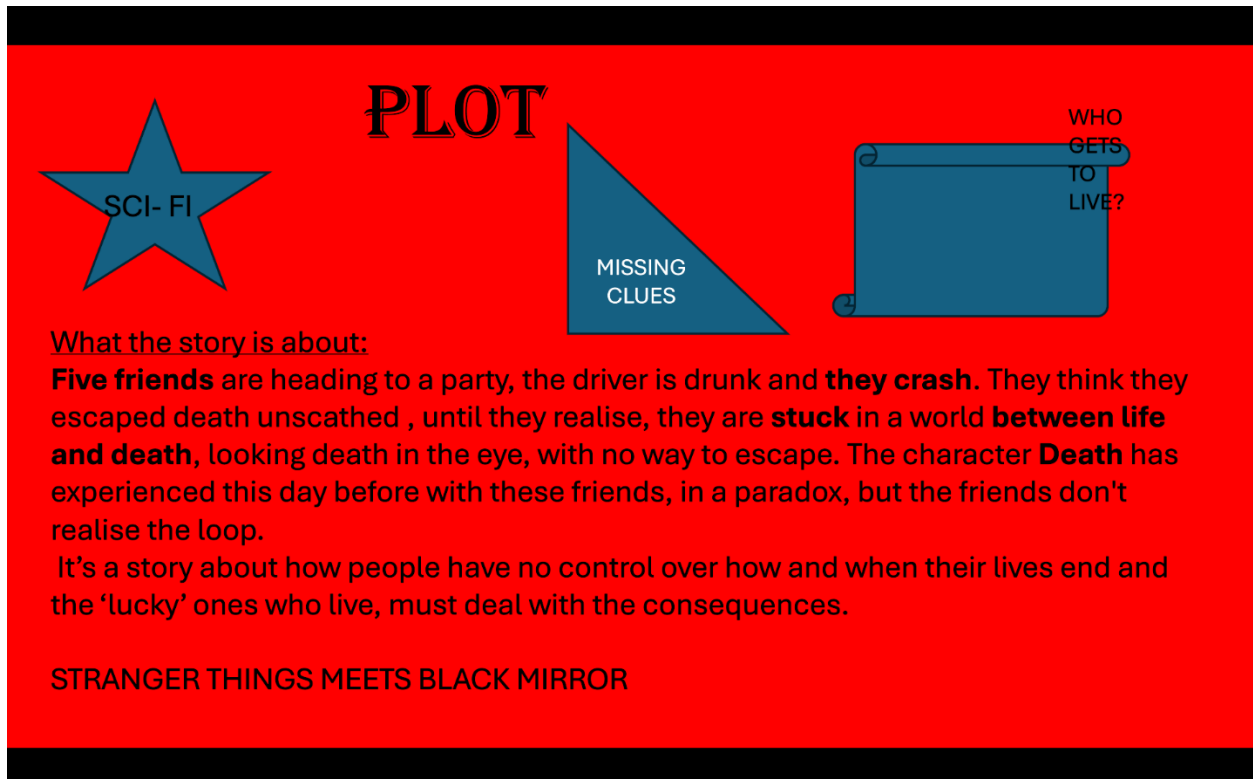
I made my first poster, inspired by a party invitation, 4.A



4.A

In **drive safe**, my character Morgan was the irresponsible older sister.

I also created the log line, 'A **log line** is a one or two sentence summary of your screenplay that conveys the premise but also adds an emotional aspect that hooks the reader'. (Maio, 2025). My logline was: 'Five friends go for a drive but end up looking death in the eye'. I also summarised the plot based on the ideas developed collaboratively as a group, see photo below, 5.A.



The beat sheet

*'A **beat sheet** is a tool used in screenwriting to outline the key events or 'beats' in a story. It serves as a guide for structuring the narrative, and to ensure that important plot points and moments of character development are included in the script to help drive the story forward.'* (Maestro, 2024)

During the pitching process, our characters initially began as stereotypes, so using the beat sheet helped me think more deeply about what my potential character journey could be.

My character, Millie, was dating Max, and her main arc involved being cheated on. I decided to make her less of an archetype and I wanted to develop her into a more complex character by giving her a journey of discovery. This made her realistic and more dimensional. As an actor, I had an opportunity to play a character who gradually discovers her identity which felt more layered than a stereotypical 'chav'. In previous modules, I received feedback encouraging me to play more high-status characters and I saw a chance to build my confidence with roles as such in this module.

With Keiron, we improvised the first time meeting each other. This helped the process develop because I had to start making immediate choices about my characters' opinions and behavior. It also helped shape later narrative decisions.

I found the beat sheet the most difficult element to create. There were many creative possibilities, and it was easy to develop ideas that were not practical. 'One of the most useful strategies for finding and developing ideas is to work out what limitations you will face during the creation of your film' (Parker, 2007, p. 18). Recognising this helped us to refine our ideas. For example, we decided to make the camera a person instead of changing perspectives between characters which made the narrative clearer for an audience to follow.

The first draft/ vomit draft

I am familiar with *Fade-In* (INC., 2026), the software for writing scripts, and I am an organised person, so I oversaw keeping the files of each draft.

We mostly used the first draft to experiment with dialogue and see what worked. '*Whatever goes down on paper, that first gush of words is unlikely to produce anything of great value. What that gush will do is give you something to work with*' (Thurlow, 2008, p. 29). This gave me the freedom to play with my dialogue.

As I am not from Essex, I watched '*The Only Way Is Essex*' (Wrigley, 2010-26) to get inspiration for Millie's dialogue. I noticed some common themes, for example, when in arguments they tend to repeat the same question or phrase and their dialogue is usually quite heightened. I also asked Maarc, who's from Essex, about the current slang words used as my Irish vernacular is different.

I found speaking the lines I had written out loud helped me to decipher which dialogue flowed. We were mostly in charge of writing our own lines, but we made sure that everyone was at each session. I thought that it could be chaotic to have six voices writing, but it worked very well for us. By having different voices and experiences in the room, we were able to create dialogue and moments that were universally experienced. I feel it is the best way for me to work as I can get different perspectives on scene.

With each scene, we created a beginning, middle and end. If 'nothing' happened in the scene that served the plot of us graduating, we then reworked it.

Final Draft

In terms of group decisions within the last draft, we operated on a voting system if we had an agreement. I found that disagreeing opinions helped me to push myself further with my story telling skills. For example, my character is intelligent which is not the focus of her arc, so I decided to add it to my interviews and in the credits. I started to think outside the box and explore other ways of giving information to the audience other than dialogue in the scenes.

Character work

I used Uta Hagen's eight questions (see appendix 2) to discover information on my character. *'These are questions we must ask ourselves and explore and define in order to act'* (Hagen, 1973, p. 83). The questions allowed me to explore the subtext of her life and then, to let her experiences be the reason why she responds to people or situations that way.

The way she dressed also inspired me with my choices. In the film, she has a journey of self-discovery, which I showed through her costume choices. For example, she wears coloured clothes at the start, then changes to only dark colours to reflect her internal turmoil. See images below (6A-C).



6.A



6.B



6.C

I did an Essex accent; I could have done more preparation on words with more vowels as they revealed my real accent. I was not sure if I wanted to use it a few days before filming, but I am proud that I tried and it is something for me to work for my future tool kit as an actor.

Screen vs stage

A majority of my acting experience is in theatre, so it was a change to be in front of a character. The biggest difference I noticed was who the audience was. In theatre there is a live audience whereas on screen, the audience is the camera. This meant that my gestures and movements were smaller than stage. *'Without the need to reach the last row of an auditorium, the actor can behave much more realistically'* (James Hindman, N/A, p. 19).

Filming days reflection

I thought it would be beneficial to do rehearsals with the camera before we started to film. I noticed this proved crucial to a steady and smooth filming process as I knew all my beats.

We had done some practice shots with Andrew at the start of the module, where he was panning the camera across from each actor, like how we filmed B1 F8. This helped me gauge and practice to always be aware of the camera. *'The key here is to articulate the performance in relation to the camera, or to be more precise, the camera's field of vision'* (Higson, 2004, p. 152). It was important to make eye contact with the camera to remind the audience that it was a person. See appendix 3.

The process of being in scenes which are filmed out of order felt different than being in a play and getting to experience the whole arc in one go. I found that by walking through the previous scene in the script before filming, it helped me gauge what part of the story Millie was on. *'What the actor needs to know is the route this journey will take and the destination it will reach. You in the role must stay naïve – only knowing where you've come from, where you want to go and the moment that is 'now''* (Churcher, 2014, p. 31).

I took photos of the filming days, see appendix 4.

Reflection on rushes

I noticed that the takes improved as I went on because I found a rhythm with my text and the camera.

From a performance point of view from what I saw, I thought I did a good job of forming a character. I noticed my speech was very quick on some takes, which came down to being nervous, so I am going to research tools for relaxing and grounding myself to improve my future performances.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1- before and after with my self tape





Appendix 2- Uta Hagen Character Work

Millie character.

- From Essex, Her full name is Millie Scott. She's 21
- in a relationship with Max
- Has always been in a relationship - doesn't like being alone
- Hobbies include: practising makeup - doing her tan & she likes designing outfits & her bedroom - which led her to wanting to design & develop the maintenance of aircraft machines
- I think she is very street smart
- She is not naturally very book smart but wants to be the first person in her family to go to Uni
- Her boyfriend Max, distracts her from her uni work sometimes but she knows if she doesn't put in the extra work she won't pass
- She grew up in Essex, with a single mum & three siblings
- An older sister, Gemma who's a hairdresser
- Two younger brothers, Luke & Callum, still in school
- She gets her work ethic from her mum, she has seen how it's difficult to raise four children with a minimum wage job in a department store & she wants to work very hard & ~~get~~ get a good job so she can give back to her mum

Although she is stereotypically a 'char' girl from Essex she wants to break her family cycle.

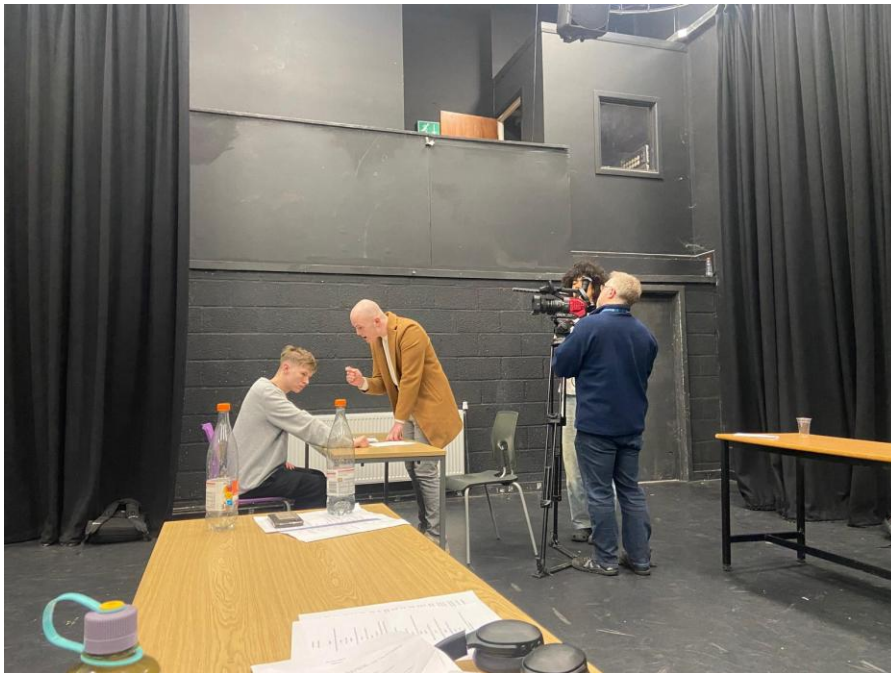
Relationship with Characters.

Max:

- Her and Max have been going out for 8 months, she believes it to be a stable relationship. She enjoys spending time with him, there is trust & love in this relationship.
- Although she sometimes finds it difficult if they argue because she doesn't want to scare him away.
- She has an anxious attachment so she might overcompensate with love and acts of love.

- > at the start, she was scared to open up which means when Max cheats on her she becomes heart broken
- > she's obsessed with her appearance, due to low self-esteem.

Appendix 3- Rehearsal with Andrew



Appendix 4- Filming day shots



Reference list

Churcher, M., 2014. In: *A Screen Acting Workshop*.. London: Nich Hern Books , p. 31.

Davies, G., 2015. *Quiche Isn't Sexy*. First ed. s.l.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Hagen, U., 1973. In: *Respect for Acting* . New Jersey : John Wiley & Sons , p. 83.

Heckmann, C., 2022. *What is a Mockumentary — Definition, Examples & History*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-mockumentary-definition/> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Higson, A., 2004. In: *Film Acting and independent Cinema* . New York : Routledge , p. 152 .

INC., G. C. P., 2026. *Fade- In: Professional Screen Writing Software, Developed by Kent Tessman*, s.l.: s.n.

James Hindman, L. K. E. M., N/A. In: *TV Acting: A manual for camera performance*. New York : Hasting House , p. 19.

Maestro, B., 2024. *How to write a beat sheet*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bbcmaestro.com/blog/how-to-write-a-beat-sheet> [Accessed 16 January 2026].

Maier, R. G., 1994. In: *LOCATION SCOUTING AND MANAGEMENT BOOK*. America : Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 7.

Maio, A., 2025. *What is a Logline?*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-logline/> [Accessed 10 January 2026].

News, I., 2025. *The Enduring Legacy of Peep Show in British Comedy*. [Online] Available at: <https://invisiverse.com/the-enduring-legacy-of-peep-show-in-british-comedy/> [Accessed 12 January 2026].

Parker, N., 2007. In: H. Patterson, ed. *Short films.. how to make and distrubite them* . Herts: Kamera Books , p. 18.

Peep Show. 2003-15. [Film] Directed by Andrew O'Connor. United Kingdom: Channel 4 .

STUDIOBINDER, 2024. *What is Pre-Production in Film — A Blueprint for Success*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-pre-production-definition/> [Accessed 10th January 2026].

The Girls Bathroom: A Documentary. 2025. [Film] Directed by mackenzie chang. USA: lindsay watt.

Thurlow, C., 2008. In: *Making Short Films*. Oxford: Berg, p. 29.

Wrigley, T. W. & R., 2010-26. *The Only Way is Essex*, Essex: ITV.

Bibliography

A blue door. 2019. [Film] Directed by Paul Taylor. United Kingdom: 13 Door Films .

Churcher, M., 2014. In: *A Screen Acting Workshop*.. London: Nich Hern Books , p. 31.

Davies, G., 2015. *Quiche Isn't Sexy*. First ed. s.l.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Dust. 2014. [Film] Directed by Ben Ockrent & Jake Russell. UK : One Giant Production Ltd.

Every episode of sex and the city: part 2. 2025. [Film] Directed by Julia DiCesare. USA: Julia DiCesare.

Every episode of sex and the city. 2025. [Film] Directed by Julia DiCesare. USA : Julia DiCesare.

Exit Stragety. 2018. [Film] Directed by Travis Bible. USA: Travis Bible.

Hagen, U., 1973. In: *Respect for Acting* . New Jersey : John Wiley & Sons , p. 83.

Heckmann, C., 2022. *What is a Mockumentary — Definition, Examples & History*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-mockumentary-definition/> [Accessed 5 January 2026].

Higson, A., 2004. In: *Film Acting and independent Cinema* . New York : Routledge , p. 152 .

INC., G. C. P., 2026. *Fade- In: Professional Screen Writing Software, Developoed by Kent Tessman*, s.l.: s.n.

James Hindman, L. K. E. M., N/A. In: *TV Acting: A manual for camera performance*. New York : Hasting House , p. 19.

Maestro, B., 2024. *How to write a beat sheet*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bbcmaestro.com/blog/how-to-write-a-beat-sheet> [Accessed 16 January 2026].

Maier, R. G., 1994. In: *LOCATION SCOUTING AND MANAGEMENT BOOK*. America : Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 7.

Maio, A., 2025. *What is a Logline?*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-logline/> [Accessed 10 January 2026].

Mandem. 2020. [Film] Directed by John Ogunmuyiwa. UK : Million Youth Media .

Mop. 2015. [Film] Directed by Dominic Houghton. USA: Dream Storm Studios.

News, I., 2025. *The Enduring Legacy of Peep Show in British Comedy*. [Online]
Available at: <https://invisiverse.com/the-enduring-legacy-of-peep-show-in-british-comedy/>

[Accessed 12 January 2026].

Parker, N., 2007. In: H. Patterson, ed. *Short films.. how to make and distribute them* .
Herts: Kamera Books , p. 18.

Peep Show. 2003-15. [Film] Directed by Andrew O'Connor. United Kingdom: Channel 4 .

Post-It. 2009. [Film] Directed by Carl Neilsson. USA: Future Shorts .

Skills, S., n.d. *What does a set decorator do?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.screenskills.com/job-profiles/browse/film-and-tv-drama/craft/set-decorator/>

[Accessed 10 January 2026].

Staff, B., 2024. *How to Become a Location Scout for Movies and TV*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/location-scout-70421/>

[Accessed 29 January 2026].

Stalled. 2022. [Film] Directed by Matt Black. USA: Omeletto .

Stream of Conscience. 2024. [Film] Directed by Sadie Schoenberger. USA: Youtube.

STUDIOBINDER, 2024. *What is Pre-Production in Film — A Blueprint for Success*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-pre-production-definition/>

[Accessed 10th January 2026].

The Girls Bathroom: A Documentary. 2025. [Film] Directed by mackenzie chang. USA:
lindsay watt.

The Raisin. 2023. [Film] Directed by Rob Carter. USA: Rob Carter.

The Reality of Apartment Hunting. 2025. [Film] Directed by James McConnell. USA: Julia
DiCesare.

Thurlow, C., 2008. In: *Making Short Films*. Oxford: Berg, p. 29.

To Brooklyn and Back. 2025. [Film] Directed by Samba. USA : Youtube.

Trapped Between Worlds. 2023. [Film] Directed by Jacinta Alves. N/A: Youtube.

Webb, J., n.d. *Should self-tapes be filmed vertically or horizontally?*. [Online]

Available at: <https://actingmagazine.com/2024/08/should-self-tapes-be-filmed-vertically->

or-horizontally/

[Accessed 7 January 2026].

White Women of the West Village. 2025. [Film] Directed by Julia DiCesare. USA : Julia DiCesare.

Work. 2019. [Film] Directed by Aneil Karia. USA: Scott O'Donnell.

Wright, W. A., 2023. *13 Self-Tape Mistakes That Sabotage Your Audition*. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/self-tape-mistakes-5980/>
[Accessed 2nd January 2026].

Wrigley, T. W. & R., 2010-26. *The Only Way is Essex*, Essex: ITV.